



Converging on the Person: Emerging Technologies for the Common Good

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Emerging Technologies for the Common Good: Theological Reflections

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- NBIC technologies seem to influence the essence of human identity through human–machine augmentation and enhanced cognitive capacity.
- This is indeed a concern to thinkers from different walks of life.

Converging on Human

- All sciences and technologies move around certain fundamental questions about the nature of (i) matter and energy, (ii) life, and (iii) mind.
- Humans and machine become closer and the interface for machines to communicate with the human brain or nervous system is likely to be evolved.

Objectives

1. To analyze theologically the features of human existence in the context of the converging of technologies on humans.
2. To explain human identity with nuances in the context of emerging convergence, and to redefine humans' mission.

Collective Human Endeavour and the Common Good

- Every human endeavour has a positive leap for the well-being of the human family.
- With the help of science and technology, humans have extended their mastery over nearly the whole of nature and continue to do so.
- *Gaudium et Spes* reiterates that the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic and evolutionary one.

Emerging Technologies and Religion

- The technologies would enhance genuine faith.
- Rather than the cultic and ritualistic layers of religion, the inner core that remains still unearthed would be clearer.
- The NBIC technologies and their converging signify the interconnectedness of the Cosmos. The interface evolving among bio-neuro-nano and computer technologies certify this fact.

Imago Dei

- *Imago Dei* may be considered the highest form of humans; their residence of reason, knowledge, understanding, cognition, freedom, love, and virtue.
- As emerging technologies converge on humans, the interface of the human body and electronic circuitry persuades us to re-think *Imago Dei*. The co-creator concept best fits the functional typology of *Imago Dei*.
- An understanding of the features of hybridity is necessary here.

Hybridity

- Hybridity - The mixing of multiple parts that were typically once separate.
- Hybridity is a methodology too as it brings together otherwise discrete parts. It gives us a tool to transgress substantive and essential categories which act as stumbling blocks in the Theology-Technology dialogue.
- Hybridity helps in understanding technology and cyberspace, not as an accident, or aberration, but as integral to the evolutionary process.

Created Co-Creator

- The term 'created' can be understood as our own 'createdness' which affirms that ultimately we are also creatures and as such dependent.
- 'Co' in co-creator represents relations, mutuality, and partnership with God.
- The term 'co-creator' would connote the freedom of the human being. God grants creation its creative freedom, for the sake of love and relationship.

Hybridity and Traditional Boundaries

- Technology supports humans to overcome their limitations. It is nothing imposed from the outside.
- It is the human mind that ‘leaks’ out into the technological tools and prostheses that human beings use in everyday life.
- In the face of NBIC technologies, the boundaries about what is or is not human and non-human begin to blur.

Techno-Optimism and Idolatry

- Technological optimists think that technology can solve all the issues related to human life. Converging technologies may promote such thoughts with the revolutionary features of NBIC.
- The over-domination of technology in solving various issues threatens the human ability to think and act ethically.
- Techno-optimism may lead to idolatry of technology.

Technological Determinism

- Proponents of this theory think that humans cannot control technology, while technology shapes them.
- It makes an impression that technology is associated with a mystery that humans cannot easily unravel and human life is techno-centric.
- This view implies that humans are mere slaves of technology.

Optimism or Determinism?

- Techno-optimism is idolatry and determinism is slavery.
- What we need are investigations to develop radically different technologies.
- Society is technology-driven to a certain extent, but our free will transcends it.

Dehumanization and Mechanization

- Dehumanization is a consequence of the idolatry of technology.
- Machine-augmented humans may accelerate Mechanization.
- Technological parameters may get undue importance and the genuinity of free will may be watered down.

No Technology Replaces Humans

- Though technology can simulate certain general features of human beings, it cannot replicate or clone any particular individual.
- Hence, it could be stated that AI or related technologies of NBIC are unable to replace human beings.

A New Perspective on Humans

- Converging technologies when integrated into human life, provide new perspectives on human reality, human dignity, and the meaning of life.
- The technologies facilitate our self-understanding with new insights about human creation and the features of biological systems.
- God's creative powers are mirrored in NBIC. Converging technologies can be seen as a result of our God-given imagination and courage to be co-creators by creating something new.

Human Dignity

- Human dignity lies in humans' call to communion with God.
- Technology promotes communication and interpersonal contact but does not enhance dialogue.
- As communication would be mostly to gadgets, the person on the other side may not be duly acknowledged. This context demands mutual respect for the full dignity of the person.

A Few Challenges

- The traditional religion may not be able to engage confidently and constructively with the hybrid technological evolution like a cyborg.
- The technologized human may challenge traditional assumptions like embodied human existence.
- Ambiguities would arise in the quantity and quality of the humanity of the technologized human in the light of the symbiotic relationship to technology, loss of self that follows fusion with technology, confusion over techno-blurred boundaries of life and death, etc.

Mission

- To promote human interactions and relations.
- To set and practise relevant ethical norms.

Conclusion

- Converging technologies are definitely for the good of humans and the technologies are converging on humans.
- Human dignity will not be affected by automation, advances in AI, brain-computer interfaces, cyborgs, or any such developments.

Conclusion...

- Certain special functions of the human body and mind could be enhanced with the help of technology.
- The insights about humans as the *Imago-Dei* will be enhanced with the potential features of the NBIC technologies.
- The converging of technologies causes tensions and anxieties during its transition periods. Such anxieties would disappear in course of time.

Finally...

- With the man-machine interface and hybridity, the essence of humans, which exists beyond any AI-based or bio-nanobot-type programming will be more specifically understood.
- The essence may be small in terms of arithmetic evaluation, but the uniqueness of the essence would be remarkable as it offers fascinating insights into *Imago Dei*.

Thank You

Thank You All

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Domains of being (Domains of Science and Religion)

